

# ENLISTED CAREER NOTES



## SKILL DEVELOPMENT TESTS

The old skill qualification test (SQT) is gone, and NCOs must now zero in on the new skill development test (SDT).

The SDT is a formally administered written test of leadership, training management, and military occupational specialty (MOS) knowledge. It is one of the key elements that will determine NCO promotions, assignments, school selection, and retention in the future.

The Army established the SDT as a way for NCOs to measure and guide their own professional growth and development as leaders. The SQT was designed primarily to support individual training in units. The SDT puts the responsibility for self-development and advancement on the individual NCO, not on the unit.

The SDTs administered this year are for record. The tests developed by the U.S. Army Infantry School cover 11B, 11C, 11H, and 11M MOS skills. The objective of these SDTs is to measure and guide NCOs as they grow in skill and competency.

Each sergeant, staff sergeant, and sergeant first class will take a two-hour written test consisting of 100 questions in three categories: 20 questions on leadership, 20 on training, and 60 on MOS knowledge. Each NCO rank in an MOS has a separate SDT.

The questions are selected from the ITEM BANK of questions maintained by the MOS proponent (the Infantry School for infantry MOSs), the Combined Arms Center (CAC), and the Sergeant's Major Academy. The MOS questions are based on soldier's manual tasks and are written annually by subject matter experts. No more than 75 percent of the previous year's questions will appear on a given year's SDTs.

NCOs will receive their SDT notices about two months before they are to take the test at a selected site. Each NCO is

responsible for preparing for the test; no unit time will be devoted to these preparations. Commands must spot-check to see that NCOs are receiving the appropriate publications for study when they need them. The specific manuals and references to study in each category are the following:

- Leadership Section—Field Manuals (FMs) 22-100, 22-101, 22-102.
- Training Section—FM 25-101.
- MOS Knowledge Section—MOS-specific soldier's manuals and supporting references.

Initial test results are issued within 30 days, and final scores are issued two to three months after testing. The passing score for the SDT is 70 percent, ten points higher than for the SQT. Beginning in Fiscal Year 1994 for the Active Army and 1995 for the Reserve Components, an NCO's score will be linked to the Enlisted Personnel Management System (EPMS). The EPMS makes the SDTs an effective tool for promoting NCO development and also recognizes and rewards those who excel in this area. It will therefore require individual study, research, professional reading, and self-assessment.

The importance of studying properly for SDTs can be summed up as follows:

**Focus.** An NCO focuses his efforts to excel on the test by applying the approach that is best suited to the specific subject matter. His first step is to ensure in his own mind that he will obtain the best possible score. To do this, he must have a well-devised study plan, make sure he has the appropriate manuals and reference materials, and then execute the plan on schedule. This means focusing on self-discipline.

The amount of time an NCO should study depends on his individual ability to read, understand, and apply the material. Past study statistics indicate that only four out of five NCOs actually

studied at all in preparing for the test. Exit surveys from the 1993 SDTs indicate that 48 percent of the soldiers taking the tests had studied for ten hours or less.

**Feedback.** Unit commanders will become more involved by studying feedback and scores from available data and reports. Feedback is (or should be) aimed at the soldier himself. Test scores should tell him what his strengths and weaknesses are and where he stands in relation to his peers.

**Fortune.** There are several types of rewards for an NCO who is willing to study to increase and demonstrate his knowledge of his specific MOS. Self-satisfaction is one type of reward. Knowing that he has mastered the necessary skills in his MOS will be a positive factor. Recognition by his peers and superiors when he does well on the test is another form of reward. Individual NCOs who score high may be rewarded with key assignments, and qualified NCOs will receive monetary rewards through promotions.

**Future.** With the downsizing of the Army, competition for positions and leadership roles will be greater than in the past. SDT scores will be highly important as boards meet to select NCOs for promotion to higher ranks. These scores—along with a review of the individual NCO's leadership skills, MOS knowledge, completed schools, enlisted evaluation reports, and training—will clearly identify the better qualified NCOs.

An NCO's individual effort as he studies and strives to improve in his MOS is vital to his career, and to his service to our nation.

*(This item was prepared by infantry subject-matter experts SSG Eastman, 11M; SFC Reynolds, 11H; SSG Wilcox, 11B; and SFCs Thompson and Ervin, 11C.)*

# OFFICERS CAREER NOTES



## CAPTAINS PROMOTION BOARD

The next captains board has been scheduled for 10-27 May 1994. The zone of eligibility is based on date of rank, not year group. Last year's board considered lieutenants with dates of rank from 1 September 1991 through 31 August 1992. The Fiscal Year (FY) 1994 board should cover 1 September 1992 through 30 September 1993.

The current plan to reduce the actual promotion point to 48 months means the current list will be exhausted by October 1994, and the promotion of officers on the FY 1994 list will begin in November 1994.

Infantry Branch offers the following advice to lieutenants preparing for the board:

- Order a copy of your microfiche (call DSN 221-9612). Make sure it contains your academic evaluation report (AER) from the Infantry Officer Basic Course and all officer evaluation reports. If your Ranger orders or awards and decorations are not on the microfiche, get them in.

- Make sure the officer record brief (ORB) that goes before the board is correct. Use white-out and type or use red ink, but make it neat.

- Don't wait until the last minute to have your official photo taken. Make sure your uniform is neat and fits correctly, and get a good haircut. The board uses the photo to see if you are fit and if you look like you belong in a uniform.

To ensure that your file is straight, call CPT Mark Erwin in April at (703) 325-5516 or DSN 221-5516.

## MAJORS BOARD

The 1994 Army Competitive Category Majors Promotion Board is scheduled to convene on 5 April 1994. Eligibility consideration is based on active dates of

rank for promotion to captain as follows:

- Above the Zone—1 September 1987 and earlier.

- Promotion Zone—2 September 1987 through 1 February 1989.

- Below the Zone—2 February 1989 through 1 March 1990.

Eligible officers should read PERSCOM message, subject: FY 94 Major, Army Competitive Category, Promotion Board Zones of Consideration. All personnel services centers and military personnel offices received copies of this message in January 1994. It contains specific instructions on processing evaluation reports, procedures for ORB reviews, official photograph updates, and guidelines for submitting letters to the president of the board.

A current photo and ORB are the two most important of the items that you can influence. Make sure you have a recent color photo in a properly fitted uniform with the correct awards and decorations. No infantry cords. If you have any questions, call the Captains Desk at Infantry Branch, (703) 325-5520 or DSN 221-5520.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following professional development opportunities are available for company-grade officers. Most of these programs are highly competitive and require officers with strong files and good academic potential.

**Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS):** Annually, the Army sends officers to full-time, fully funded civilian schooling to obtain advanced degrees that qualify them for positions validated under the Army Educational Requirements System (AERS).

**U.S. Military Academy (USMA) Instructor Program:** The five-year USMA instructor program includes 18

to 24 months of graduate study followed by a three-year utilization tour at USMA in an instructor or staff officer position.

**U.S. Military Academy (USMA) Tactical Officer Program:** This four-year assignment as a tactical officer at West Point is part of the Dwight David Eisenhower Program of Graduate Studies in Leader Development.

**Degree Completion Program (DCP):** This partially funded, noncompetitive program enables an officer to obtain a baccalaureate or graduate degree. The officer pays tuition, books, and other fees associated with civilian college attendance.

**Olmsted Scholarship:** This three-phased scholarship program is designed to give the Army a group of officers who have an in-depth knowledge of foreign countries. The officers selected by the Olmsted foundation attend language training at the Defense Language Institute and then complete two years of academic study in foreign countries. They may be offered opportunities to pursue one-year master's degrees.

**Harvard/DCSOPS Fellowship:** This fellowship program is designed to provide the Army with trained strategists. Officers selected for the program by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (ODCSOPS) attend Harvard University for one year to earn master's degrees in public administration, with follow-on assignments to ODCSOPS for three years.

Any officer who is interested in one of these development opportunities should complete DA Form 1618-R (a reproducible form found in Army Regulation 621-1) and forward it to his assignment officer at Infantry Branch. Additionally, he must have a current DA photo, copies of his undergraduate transcripts, and current GRE or GMAT scores in his file.